

Message Text

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S E C R E T NASSAU 428

MEXICO CITY FOR REGIONAL FISHERIES ATTACHE

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: EFIS, PBOR, BY, US

SUBJ: FISHERIES DISPUTE - A REVIEW

REF: NASSAU 355, 340 AND PREVIOUS

BEGIN SUMMARY: THIS CABLE REVIEWS THE STATUS OF THE BAHAMIAN-
US FISHERIES DISPUTE AND MAKE SUGGESTIONS FOR LONG AND SHORT
TERM MEASURES TO AMELIORATE IT. END SUMMARY

1. NOW THAT THE APPEALS COURT DECISION, THE RELEASE OF THE
FISHERMEN, AND THE ILA BOYCOTT ARE BEHIND US, THIS SEEMS AN
APPROPRIATE OCCASION TO REVIEW THE SITUATION AND SEE WHERE
WE GO FROM HERE.

2. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE:

A. THE APPEALS COURT VERDICT HAS CLOSED OFF THE POSSI-
BILITY OF SOME RELIEF THROUGH JUDICIAL CHANNELS AND WITH IT
THE SAFETY VALVE WHICH THIS GAVE US IN DEALING WITH THE
FLORIDA FISHERMEN AND THEIR SUPPORTERS IN THE CONGRESS. THE
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FISHERMEN HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE IN BAHAMIAN ENFORCEMENT AND JUDICIAL PROCEDURES AND ARE NOW MORE PRONE TO TAKE THE LAW INTO THEIR OWN HANDS. THE ILA BOYCOTT AND MR. FRIEDMAN'S THREATS (SEE NASSAU A-88) ARE EVIDENCE OF THIS. THUS, AS THE GOVERNOR PREDICTED LAST FALL, THE SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED.

B. THE REPORTS OF DISCUSSIONS ON FISHERIES WITH THE PM AND THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS WHILE IN WASHINGTON SEEM TO DISPEL HOPES FOR RELIEF THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND:

A. THE END OF THE CURRENT LOBSTER SEASON MARCH 31 WILL GIVE US A FOUR- MONTH RESPITE WHILE BAHAMIAN TEMPERS COOL FROM THE SHOCK OF THE ILA BOYCOTT. IT WILL ALSO BE HELPFUL NOT TO HAVE THIS IRRITANT ACTIVE WHILE WE ARE DISCUSSING MILITARY BASE RIGHTS.

B. SINCE THE BIMINI EPISODE LAST OCTOBER, BAHAMIAN POLICE PATROLLING APPEARS TO HAVE FALLEN OFF CONSIDERABLY SUGGESTING THAT THAT INCIDENT AND ITS AFTERMATH MAY HAVE MADE THE GBOI MORE CAUTIONS.

4. IN THE LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

A. BASICALLY THIS IS A PROBLEM WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO LIVE WITH UNTIL PRESSURES AND/ OR INCENTIVES BRING THE GOBI TO ACCEPT SOME NEGOTIATED SOLUTION. FORESEEABLE PRESSURES ARE FURTHER CLASHES AND THREATS OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN U. S. FISHERMEN AND BAHAMIAN FISHERMEN AND OFFICIALS, AND POSSIBLY MORE BOYCOTTS. U. S. DIFFICULTY IN PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO THE BAHAMIAN MARINE POLICE WHILE THIS DISPUTE IS UNRESOLVED COULD PROVIDE OTHER LEVERAGE. ASSISTANCE IN HELPING THE BAHAMAS ATTRACT INVESTMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ITS OWN FISHING INDUSTRY MIGHT PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR AGREEMENT.

B. FOR THE NEAR TERM:

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A REASONABLE POSTURE VIS- A- VIS THE GOBI, AND WE PROBABLY OWE IT TO THE FLORIDA FISHERMEN TO MAKE ONE MORE TRY AT DISCUSSIONS.

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ACCORDINGLY, THE CONSULATE GENERAL PROPOSES GOING OVER THE

PROBLEM INFORMALLY WITH MINISTER ADDERLEY, WHO IS NEW TO THE SITUATION, AND REVIEWING THE FACTUAL BACKGROUND AND OUR POSITION TO SEE IF FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS ARE POSSIBLE.

WE SHOULD ALSO SEEK TO WORK OUT SOLUTIONS TO PRACTICAL PROBLEMS, WHICH MAY HELP DEFUSE THIS DISPUTE OR AT LEAST PREVENT ITS ESCALATION. THE DEPARTMENT'S GEOGRAPHER HAS ISSUED CHARTS OF THE BAHAMAS "HYPOTHETICAL" FISHERY ZONE, AND THIS IS HELPFUL. WE SHOULD ALSO EXPLORE OTHER MEANS OF TRYING TO HELP OUR FISHERMEN KEEP TO INTERNATIONAL WATERS. THIS COULD BE DONE BY COAST GUARD PATROLS OR THROUGH SOME COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT BY WHICH LARGER FISHING VESSELS WITH BETTER NAVIGATION GEAR ASSIST SMALLER VESSELS IN KEEPING OUT OF THE BAHAMIAN
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